wonderful visit we've had, and welcome you here to the White House.

Prime Minister Siniora. Thank you very much, Mr. President. I would like to really thank President Bush for giving us the opportunity to be here at the White House and to discuss matters of mutual interest to the United States and Lebanon, and matters that has to do with the developments that have been taking place in Lebanon.

For the past—over 16 or 18 months, Lebanon has been undergoing major changes. And Lebanon has really been committing itself that we want the change to happen to—in a democratic and a peaceful manner, but at the same time, to really stay course—on course; that we are there to meet the expectations of the people to have a united, liberal, free country, and, at the same time, prosperous economy.

So that are the matters that we have discussed with President Bush. And I really would like to seize this opportunity to thank President Bush and the United States for the support that they have been extending to Lebanon throughout the past periods and with all the resolutions that were taken since the assassination of Prime Minister Hariri. The United States has been of great support to Lebanon.

I am really convinced that President Bush and the United States will stand beside Lebanon to have Lebanon stay as a free, democratic, united, and sovereign state. And the United States is really of great importance in this regard, whether this can be done directly or indirectly. So I would like once more to express our great thanks for President Bush and the United States for this.

President Bush. Thank you, sir. Appreciate it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:51 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

Remarks at Parkland Magnet Middle School for Aerospace Technology in Rockville, Maryland

April 18, 2006

Thanks for having me. Please be seated. Madam Secretary—I never thought I'd be saying that 10 years ago, I might add. Of course, she never thought I'd be President. [*Laughter*] It is good to be here with you all. Thanks to Parkland Magnet Middle School for having us. We just had an amazing tour. I say "amazing tour" because we saw what a unique place Parkland is, and we saw a really diverse student body. There's people from all kinds of backgrounds here.

We saw some—three really wonderful teachers, people who are dedicated to their profession, who deeply care about the students they teach. And for all of you here who are teachers, thanks for carrying on a really noble profession. We saw two scientists who are here from NASA. These are good, hard-working folks who said, "I kind of want to lend my expertise to try to convince a child that science is cool." You know, sometimes—you might remember those days, when you were in middle school, people say, you know, "Science isn't cool." Science is not only cool; it's really important for the future of this country. And it's great to have people we call adjunct professors here, to help lend their real-life experiences to stimulate junior high students to the wonders of science.

We saw robotics. When I was in the seventh grade, I don't think we spent much time on robotics. [*Laughter*] Of course, Mr. Jones, the teacher, probably said, "You didn't spend much time paying attention at all, did you, Mr. President." [*Laughter*] We saw people using little devices to look for sun spots. We saw the analysis of a parabola curve for sixth and seventh grade students. We saw a school that is setting high standards in the firm belief that every child can learn. That's what we saw.

And I want to thank the principal, Kevin Hobbs, for welcoming us here today. You know, Kevin skipped a vacation—at least he claimed he skipped a vacation—[*laughter*]—to be here. And I am so grateful you did so, sir. But more importantly, I am grateful that you're a principal. Great schools—the really good schools in our country have at its center an educational entrepreneur who is able to rally a teacher group to set high standards and follow through. And I want to thank you, Kevin. Again, I want to thank all the principals.

I appreciate Chris Van Hollen joining us today. Mr. Congressman, I'm pleased you

took time to be here. Thank you so much. It's a joy to be in your district.

I want to thank Nancy Grasmick, who is the Maryland State superintendent of schools. Margaret was telling me coming—I've known Nancy for a while—Margaret was talking about the implementation of No Child Left Behind—which, by the way is—I'll talk a little bit about. But it requires people who are dedicated to this firm belief that through accountability, you can determine whether or not every child is getting a good education. And I appreciate Nancy's philosophy and her service to the State of Maryland.

I want to thank—I thank Dr. Jerry Weast, who is the superintendent of schools here in Montgomery County. Jerry, thank you for your—for the tour, and thank you for your service as well. Dr. Charles Haughey, who is the board president. I don't know what's a harder job, Dr. Haughey, President of the United States or board president of a local school. [*Laughter*] Yes, I suspect board president of the Montgomery Country schools. [*Laughter*] Frank Stetson, the community superintendent—I want to thank the other State and local officials. I want to thank the parents who are here.

The truth of the matter is, the parent is really the child's first teacher. And every school I have been to as Governor or President, I have always found that parental involvement makes a significant difference in the quality of the education. So thank you for supporting the teachers and the principal who are here. Thank you for, more importantly, encouraging your children to aim high and work hard.

Here's the question that faces the country: Will we become a nation that is isolationist and fearful of competition from around the world, or will we be—continue to be a bold and innovative country?

We've got a good economy right now. And it's growing at rapid paces, and there's a lot of new jobs being added, and productivity is high, and people are owning homes, and that's all positive. The fundamental question is: How do we make sure that that's the case next year, 5 years, and 10 years from now? That's really what we're confronted with.

As you know, Hu Jintao is coming to Washington—or maybe you don't know—but the President of China is coming to Washington on Thursday. It's a very important visit. China is a very important strategic friend in many ways, and in many ways, they pose competition to us. It's a growing economy. They've got folks that are beginning to realize the benefits of a marketplace. Their entrepreneurship is strong. And we can either look at China and say, "Let's compete with China in a fair way," or say, "We can't compete with China," and therefore, kind of isolate ourselves from the world.

I've chosen the former route for the United States. I tell our people, we shouldn't fear the future; what we ought to do is shape the future. We ought to be in charge of our future. And the best way to do so is to make sure that we're the most innovative country in the world. We have been the most innovative country in the world for the past decades, and that has helped raise our standard of living. We need to always be on the leading edge of technological change. We need to be the center of research and development.

And so here are two ideas that I intend to work with Congress on to make sure that we're still the technological capital of the world—for the benefit of our people, by the way, so that the standard of living in America continues to improve for everybody. One is that we must increase Federal support for vital, basic research.

I don't know whether you realize it or not, but the Internet began as a Defense Department project to improve military communications. In other words, that was an area where the Federal Government spent research money, and out of that research and development came the Internet, which has substantially changed the way we live. The iPod, interestingly enough, was built on years of Government-funded research in microdrive storage and electrochemistry and signal compression. Isn't that interesting? I find it interesting.

In other words, investment at the Federal level in research has led to practical applications which improve the lives of our citizens. And so I proposed to the Congress that we double the Federal commitment to the most critical basic research programs in physical

sciences over the next 10 years. One way to make sure this country is the economic leader of the world so that our people benefit and can find work is for there to be a Federal commitment to research.

A second thing we can do is recognize that most research and development takes place in the private sector. That's about $200 billion a year is spent in private-sector research. In other words, we've got some of the leading companies in our country doing research as to how to develop new products that will make sure that not only their company and their shareholders benefit but that it ends up in order to the benefit of the United States.

One way to encourage people to invest corporate funds is through the research and development tax credit. In other words, it's the use of the Tax Code to say, this is in your interest the—by the way, it's in our collective interest as well—but it's in your interest, your corporate interest to invest so that your product line remains modern, so that your scientists that work for your company are able to have funds necessary to continue to think anew.

The problem we have in America is that the research and development tax credit expires on an annual basis. And if you're somebody trying to plan for your—for the next 5 years or the next 10 years, which a lot of smart people do, it's difficult to do so if every year you're wondering whether or not the Congress or the President is willing to stand up and support the research and development tax credit. So another way to make sure that this country of ours is competitive, where we don't have to fear the future because we intend to be the leader, is to make sure that the research and development tax credit is permanent, to add permanency to that in through the Tax Code.

And thirdly, and one of the reasons we're here, is to make it clear to the American people that in order for us to be competitive, we've got to make sure that our children have got the skill sets necessary to compete for the jobs of the 21st century. We live in a global world, and that creates uncertainty in some; I understand that. There's a sense of, well, the world is so big and so connected that it's—maybe we're really not in charge of things here.

In a global economy, for example, if our children do not have the skill sets for the jobs of the 21st century, the jobs are going to go somewhere else. And it's a fact of life. It's a part of the real world we have to deal with. It's a lot different from the 1950s, for example. There wasn't that sense of global competition—at least there wasn't that sense in Midland, Texas, let me put it to you that way. [*Laughter*] But there is today. If you're living in Midland, Texas, or living in Montgomery County, Maryland, it's important to understand, if children don't have those skill sets needed to compete with a child from India or a child from China, the new jobs will be going there.

And so in order to make sure we remain the leader of the world, we have got to continue our focus in education on high standards, accountability, and a new focus—an intense focus on math and science—just like what's happening in this school. I saw the children being taught the skills for the jobs of the 21st century—today. See, it's possible. As a matter of fact, it's happening in a lot of places all across America, just not enough. And this school is the kind of school that we've got to have in neighborhoods throughout the country.

And so here are some things—first of all, let me just remind you that—what the No Child Left Behind Act, as far as I'm concerned, means. It means, one, you believe every child can learn; two, you refuse to accept a system that just shuffles kids through school because they happen to be a certain age. In other words, you use an accountability system—and by the way, we've insisted upon measurement in return for Federal money. We didn't say, "We'll develop the test for you"—you develop your own accountability systems, but we expect there to be results when we spend money. And if you believe every child can learn, then you shouldn't be worried about measuring.

Some of you might remember the old reading curriculum debates, by the way—they were pretty ugly, at least when I was the Governor of Texas. People dug in on both sides of the issue, "I'm right. You're wrong; I'm right." And the best way to determine

what works is to measure. So the accountability system, which we should expect, says this: One, we believe every child can learn; therefore, let's measure to make sure every child is learning. And two, we understand there can be differences of opinion on what works and what doesn't work, so let's measure to determine what works. And third, it also makes sense to figure out how we're—how you're doing. How's Parkland doing? Are you doing well compared to other schools in the neighborhood? If not, why? And if so, keep doing what you're doing.

The accountability system is an important tool upholding people to high standards. It makes a lot of sense, as far as I'm concerned. One of the important parts of No Child Left Behind, by the way, particularly in the reading program, if you've fallen behind early, here's extra money to help you catch up. It's called supplemental services. It's a really important part of a program that says every child can read, and when we detect a child not reading, let's correct the problem early, before it's too late. In essence, we've ended social promotion, and we're having high standards. And that's what's going to be necessary to lay the foundation for the skill sets for the jobs of the 21st century. That's important.

And by the way, we're beginning to see marked improvement. How do we know? Because we're measuring. In 2005, America's fourth graders posted the best scores in reading and math in the history of the reading and math tests. And, oh, by the way, I've heard every excuse not to measure—you know, "You're teaching the test." No, you're teaching a child to read so he or she can pass the test, that's what you're doing. Or, "All you do is test." No, good schools are those who've got a curriculum that enables a child to be able to pass a standardized test. That's what we're talking about.

African American fourth graders set record scores in reading and math. That's important, and that's positive. Hispanic fourth graders set records in reading and math. That's important, and that's positive. I'm able to report this to you because we measure. If you didn't measure, you'd just have to guess, right? Maybe they're doing well; maybe they're not doing well. That system didn't work. It doesn't work very well when you end up with a high school kid graduating, who can't read, and you go, "What went wrong? Where did we fail the child? What did we do wrong for the parent?" Measurement is an important way to make sure that children are not left behind.

The National Report Card showed eighth graders earned the best math scores ever recorded; eighth grade Hispanic and African American students achieved their highest math scores ever. We're beginning to make important strides. We're closing an achievement gap in America, an achievement gap that is wrong and important for the future of this country.

But we also know through measurement that our high school students, by the time they reach high school, have fallen behind most of the developed world in math and science. So there's been some positive results that ought to encourage us, but there's some warning signs. If we want to be a competitive nation, if we want our children to be able to have the jobs of the 21st century, those jobs that are high-paying, high-skilled jobs, we better do something about the fact that we're falling behind in math and science today. Now is the time to act.

And here's some ideas. One, one of the great programs that has been proven to work is advanced placement. It is a—I went to an amazing school in downtown Dallas, a really diverse school. It's a school where you walk in—at least you used to walk in, and say, "Well, these kids aren't supposed to do well." They just happen to have set the records for passing AP science and math tests in the United States. Of course, we Texans are always saying we—you know—[*laughter*]. Just telling you, that's what they told me. [*Laughter*] The point is, they're doing well because there's an AP program that helps set high standards and makes a difference.

And so what needs to be done to make Advanced Placement work? Well, one thing, the Federal Government needs to help train 70,000 high school teachers on how to teach AP and how to administer the program and how to make sure it's a viable part of school districts all around the country.

Second, we ought to have 30,000 math and science professionals in our classrooms over

the next 8 years. Today I met two; they're called adjunct professors. As I told you earlier, it's really important for students to see firsthand what it's like to be a scientist. Margaret and I didn't do a very good job of teaching what it's like to be a scientist. The two guys from NASA did an excellent job of teaching them what it is like to be a scientist. It is—there's just something that's important for a child to connect with a role model.

And I'm not kidding when I said we need to make sure that people realize math and science are cool subjects. Now, coolness, I think, is—I think it's still prevalent in the junior high, you know? [*Laughter*] Well, there's nothing better somebody to say this is important than somebody that's actually living it—living the field, living the dream of being a scientist.

And so we've got a goal of 70,000 AP teachers and 30,000 adjunct professors in classrooms. The House of Representatives reauthorized the Higher Education Act, which included the AP program and the adjunct teacher program. And I want to thank them for that. And I look forward to getting the Senate—[*applause*].

I signed an Executive order this morning establishing what is called the national math panel. Let me describe that to you. It's a part of our strategy to make sure that we achieve the objective of laying that foundation for our children in math and science. By January 31st, 2007, the national math panel will report their assessments of the best practices for teaching math. Those experts will come together and help advise school districts about what is working and what's not working; what skills the students need at what grade to master algebra and higher mathematics. In other words, starting to set those—help set realistic standards. The standards and accountability that will be needed to ensure students are learning math—that will be a part of their mandate. They will look at the teaching methods that are most effective for students of different abilities and backgrounds. They will look at the programs and learning materials that work best.

A lot of times, school districts need a little advice on how to—what works. It's—the purchasing, at least it was in my State—there's a lot of different decisionmakers around the State. And I'm pretty confident it will make sense to have a national panel of experts make recommendations—not mandates—but recommendations about how school districts can achieve the objective of making sure math is properly taught and what needs to be used to make sure that it works.

They'll be coming up with recommendations on the most effective ways to train and select and place math teachers, which will be a very important recommendation. I'm not saying all teachers need extra help, but some teachers do. When they get out of a teachers' school, they're going to need the extra—the tools necessary to make sure we meet the goals. And so the math panel will be convening here shortly and reporting back to the country.

And I'm also proposing a new program called Math Now, which will be used to apply the recommendations. And here's what Math Now means: Teachers will be able to use the math panel's recommendations to ensure they're using the best techniques. And there will be money to help. Math Now is similar for No Child Left Behind's Reading First Initiative, which uses scientific findings compiled by the National Reading Panel to help local and State districts achieve their objectives. And by the way—sorry—it's working. The reading initiative is working. It's making an enormous difference in the lives of students from all walks of life.

Math Now for elementary school students will promote research-based practices. Math Now for middle school students will target students struggling with math.

One of the things in Reading First is that, as I told you, we use supplemental services to detect reading problems early and make sure a child gets extra help early, before it's too late. We intend to apply the same rigor in middle school for math students. The tests show we're fine in the fourth grade in math, and we're okay in eighth grade. They start to slip up prior to going to high school. That is the time to intervene in a child's academic career to make sure he or she has that skill set necessary to become the mathematicians or the scientists or the engineers by the time they get out of college.

And so that's what I've come to talk about. It's like setting realistic goals. It's understanding—it is telling this country how important public schools are to the future of our country and working with the public school system to make sure that we achieve a national objective. And that objective is to make sure that the United States of America remains the economic leader of the world, for the good of our people. And it recognizes that we have got to educate our children now for the skill sets necessary for tomorrow. And this is a better place—there's no better place to talk about that—and there is no better place to talk about that right here at Parkland Magnet Middle School for Aerospace Technology.

Thanks for letting us come by. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2 p.m. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on the Resignation of H. James Towey as Director of the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives

April 18, 2006

Jim Towey is a dedicated public servant who has served as a vital member of my administration for more than 4 years. Under his leadership, the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives has applied the compassion of America to help solve some of our most challenging problems. His office has held 23 conferences around the country, assisting tens of thousands among America's armies of compassion. Eleven Federal departments and agencies now have Centers for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives that are building upon and expanding their good works in neighborhoods across the country.

Throughout his life, Jim has worked for Democrats and Republicans as an advocate for those in need. He served as Mother Teresa's legal counsel for many years. His work on behalf of the poor and the sick has improved lives. I admire Jim for his compassion, his faith, and his sense of humor. He is a man of great integrity, and I thank him for his service. Laura and I wish Jim, Mary, and the Towey family all the best.

Proclamation 8002—National Park Week, 2006

April 18, 2006

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

In America's national parks, the magnificent beauty of our country and important examples of our Nation's cultural heritage are preserved and made available to Americans and visitors from all over the world. Each year, as we observe National Park Week, we underscore our commitment to conserve our natural and historical treasures and encourage more Americans to enjoy, learn from, and protect these important parts of our heritage.

Our Nation has a long legacy of conservation. In 1872, Yellowstone National Park became our country's first national park, and more than four decades later, the National Park Service was created. Today, the national park system includes almost 400 sites, with parks in nearly every state. From Yosemite National Park in California to Acadia National Park in Maine, and from Independence Hall to the Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site, America's national parks are home to some of our Nation's most beautiful landscapes and richest history.

This year's theme, "Connecting our Children to America's National Parks," reflects the National Park Service's commitment to encouraging young people to enjoy outdoor recreation and better appreciate our Nation's beauty and history. The National Park Service Junior Rangers program develops interest in our national parks by teaching children and their families about the importance of the national park sites. Young people can visit our national parks online by going to the Junior Rangers website at www.nps.gov/WebRangers. As Honorary Chair of the National Park Foundation, First Lady Laura Bush helps raise awareness about preservation of the parks and encourages support for programs like the Junior Rangers. Through initiatives like this, the National Park Service is promoting good stewardship of the environment and appreciation of our Nation's heritage.